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THE BAZAAR



SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE OF ART.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

ON the 15th of August, 1771, Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh. The house stood at the head of the College Wynd, but was pulled down to make room for the new college. At the age of eighteen months, it was discovered that he had lost the use of his right leg, and he was despatched to Sandy Knowe, his grandfather's residence, to see if fresh country air would do him any good. "It is here," wrote Sir Walter, in his Diary, or outline autobiography, "that I had the first consciousness of existence." Here he had a narrow escape from a crazed maid-servant who was tempted by the evil one to kill him. Here, various remedies were used for his lameness, but in vain—one was, that whenever a sheep was killed, the little fellow should be stripped naked and wrapped in the reeking hide. Here he learnt the ballad of "Hardyknute," much to the annoyance of old Doctor Duncan, the parish parson, who used pettishly to exclaim, when Walter interrupted his sober converse by shouting out his favourite lay, "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is." Sandy Knowe failing to remove the lameness, Walter, under care of aunt Jenny, was despatched to Bath, where he mastered the rudiments of reading, and for the first time went to a theatre. The play was "As you like it." Walter was scandalised that Orlando should quarrel. "What, an't they brothers?" asked Walter, to the amusement of his neighbours. From Bath, Walter returns to George's-square, Edinburgh, where the family now resided. Glimpses of childish intelligence now become common. A Mrs. Cockburn chats with him one day. "Aunt Jenny," said he at night, "I like that lady." "What lady?" asked Aunt Jenny. "Why, Mrs. Cockburn; for I think she is a *virtuoso*, like myself." "Dear Walter," said Aunt Jenny, "what is a *virtuoso*?" "Oh, don't you know? Why, it is one that wishes and will know everything." Another lady remembers the child sitting before the house when an emaciated beggar came to the door. The servant told Walter how thankful he should be that he was placed in a situation which shielded him from such want; the boy looked up with a wistful incredulous expression and said, Homer was a beggar. "How do you know that?" asked the other. "Why, don't you remember?" answered Walter,

"Seven Roman cities strove for Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

The reply was smart for a child of seven. From Edinburgh, Walter went to Preston-Pans for sea-bathing. But as he gets older, it is decided that in his ninth year he goes to school; and accordingly he returns home. Despite the rigours of the Sabbath, that Edinburgh home was a pleasant one. Here was brother Robert, afterwards a midshipman; John, who was a soldier, and died a major in 1816; and "unfortunate sister Anne," an invalid the whole of her twenty-seven years of life. Thomas, who died in Canada, was the favourite. Brother Daniel seems to have been a reprobate and worthless from his very birth.

The High School in Edinburgh, when Walter entered it, contained some remarkably clever fellows. He was three years in Mr. Fraser's class, and then, in the ordinary routine, was turned over to Dr. Adam, the rector, and well-known author of the "Roman Antiquities." Walter's school life was meteoric. His place in the class was everywhere—as often at the top as the bottom. His successes seem to have depended more upon his ingenuity than his scholarship. "What part of speech is *cum*?" once asked Dr. Adam of an incorrigible dolt. No answer was returned. "*Cum*," continued the doctor, "means *with*. Now, what part of speech is *with*?" "A substantive," quoth the dolt, and the

whole class burst into laughter. "Is *with* ever a substantive?" said the rector. The whole class was silent, until the question came to Scott, who instantly replied, in the words of Scripture: "And Samson said unto Delilah, If they bind me with seven green *withs* that were never dried, then shall I become weak and as another man." Another triumph, not so creditable, Walter shall tell in his own words:—"There was a boy in my class at school who stood always at the top, nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day after day came, and he always kept his place, do what I could; till at length I observed, that when a question was answered he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button on the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes; and in an evil hour it was removed with a knife. When the boy was again questioned, he felt for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it: it was no more to be seen than felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place; nor did he ever recover it, nor ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of this wrong." In the usual sports of boyhood, Walter Scott, despite his lameness, took his share. He could run, jump, and "climb the kettle nine stanes" with anybody. When he first made his appearance in the play-ground, he was engaged in a dispute with a boy, who scornfully replied, that it was "no use to hargle-bargle with a cripple." But Walter said that, if he might fight mounted, he would try his hand with any fellow of his inches. An elder boy proposed to lash the two little shavers face to face upon a board; which was done, to the delight of Walter, who ever afterwards, in sets-to, adopted this fashion. The boys of the upper classes in Edinburgh, in Scott's time, had regular pitched battles with the boys of the democracy of that fine old town. In these contests Scott did his part. Yet Scott made progress; and read and appreciated Cæsar and Livy and Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Terence. From Edinburgh, for change of air, Scott went to Kelso, where he read Spenser and Percy's "Reliques," the novels of England, and the romances of the South. Here he began the art which led on to fortune. He used to say to James Ballantyne: "Come, slink beside me, Jamie, and I'll tell ye a story."

At the age of thirteen Walter commenced his student life at the Edinburgh University. Here he seems to have made but little progress. The Latin professor had no influence, and the Greek class were far beyond Scott, who was too indolent to overtake them. At this time we find him dangerously ill, and miraculously recovering. In 1786 Scott was articled to his father, an advocate, for five years. These years seem to have been pleasant ones. He disliked, it is true, the drudgery of his office, and detested its confinement; but he felt a rational pride and pleasure in being useful to his parent. He became a great walker—a great antiquarian—became intimate with Jeffrey and other men worth knowing, and for the first time felt the sweetness and the power of love's young dream.

In 1792 Scott put on the advocate's robe, and a few hours after his admission some friendly solicitor retained him. His love of border legends, however, became a passion, to gratify which many an excursion was planned and many a week devoted. Nevertheless, our young advocate belonged to a club, of which, as usual, he was the master-spirit. On one occasion a certain Rev. Mr. M'Naught, being accused of habitual drunkenness, dancing at a penny wedding, and singing lewd or profane songs, entrusted his defence to Scott, who grew so free in the description of the penny wedding that he was called to order. This so damped his ardour, that when he came to quote a verse of the song spoken of, he was scarcely

audible. The club, which had crowded in the gallery to encourage him, shouted, "Hear! hear! Encore! encore!" and were immediately turned out of court. Our advocate got through very little to his own satisfaction, and his client lost his case. In 1796 Scott published his translation of Bürger's "Leonore," which, except in his circle of personal friends, proved a failure. At this time there were fears of French invasion, and Scott became an officer in a volunteer troop of horse. Next year a still more interesting incident occurred. Riding in the vicinity of the English lakes, Scott and his companion encountered a lady on horseback so wondrous fair that they followed her—met her at a ball in the evening; she turned out to be a Miss Carpenter, anglicised from Charpentier, and in December, 1797, became Mrs. Scott.

In 1797 Scott's father died, and his income was comfortably increased thereby. In December of the same year he was made sheriff of Selkirkshire—an office worth about £300 a-year, which at once set him at ease with regard to his family, and relieved him of the drudgery of his profession. Henceforth literature became the sole aim and business of his life. The result is, in 1799, a translation of Goethe's "Von Berlingen," which Matthew Lewis sold to a publisher for twenty-five guineas; in 1802 and 1803, "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," which brought in Scott £100 for the first edition, and the copyright of which he sold for £500. He was now fairly committed to his life-work. "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was nearly completed, and Scott became a contributor to the "Edinburgh Review," just established by Jeffrey and Sydney Smith.

Scott had no faith in literature alone—if he had, he might have been saved the sad catastrophe of his later years. Accordingly, he entered into partnership with the Ballantynes as booksellers and printers, and looked out for some easy birth which would increase his income with but little trouble. Such a situation he soon obtained, as one of the clerks of the Session, with £800 a-year. This rendered a journey to London necessary. Of course, he became a lion, but that did not spoil him. He amused himself as well as he could, and when he saw that he was expected to roar, would sit down and tell stories and recite ballads, to the delight of all. Already fifty thousand copies of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" had been sold, realising to the author between seven and eight hundred pounds. He returned to Scotland to work at "Marmion," and bring out his fine eighteen-volume edition of Dryden and other books. In 1810 appeared the "Lady of the Lake," the copyright of which brought him in 2,000 guineas. The next year made an agreeable change in his position. As one of the clerks of the Session his salary was made £1,300 a-year; and Scott became a Tweedside laird by the purchase of Abbotsford. Whilst building and planting, and buying and selling, he was still, however, busy with his pen. "Rokeby" appeared in 1813, and the "Bridal of Triermain" two months afterwards; but, as a poet, he had reached his zenith. Byron had appeared, and Scott was deposed. Tom Moore had also hurt the sale of "Rokeby," by writing in his "Twopenny Post-Bag," that Mr. Scott,

"Having quitted the borders to seek new renown,
Is coming by long quarto stages to town;
And beginning with 'Rokeby' (the job's sure to pay),
Means to do all the gentlemen's seats by the way."

But Scott had only to shift his ground. If he could be no longer monarch of song, the realms of romance might be his own. He wisely retired from a rivalry in which it was vain to engage, and wrote "Waverley," which appeared in 1814. Scott was now a prodigious lion; he went to London and dined with the Prince Regent. In a few months afterwards we find him at Paris with the Duke of Wellington, the Emperor Alexander, and other heroes of that fearful war which terminated in the downfall of Napoleon and the peace of the world. A little while after, Washington Irving visited Abbotsford. He thus describes him: "In a little while the lord of the castle himself made his appearance. I knew him at once, by the descriptions I had read and heard, and the likenesses that had been published of him. He was tall and of

a large and powerful frame. His dress was simple and almost rustic. An old green shooting-coat with a dog-whistle at the button-hole, brown linen pantaloons, stout shoes that tied at the ankles, and a white hat that had evidently seen some service. He came limping up the gravel-walk, aiding himself by a stout walking-staff, but moving rapidly and with vigour. By his side jogged along a large iron-gray stag-hound of most grave demeanour, who took no part in the clamour of the canine rabble, but seemed to consider himself bound, for the dignity of the house, to give me a courteous reception. Before Scott had reached the gate, he called out in a hearty tone, welcoming me to Abbotsford, and asking news of Campbell. Arrived at the door of the chaise, he grasped me warmly by the hand. 'Come, drive down to the house,' said he. 'Ye're just in time for breakfast, and afterwards ye shall see the wonders of the abbey.' I would have excused myself on the plea of having already made my breakfast. 'Hout, man,' cried he, 'a ride in the morning, in the keen air of the Scottish hills, is warrant enough for a second breakfast.' Such was the hearty, energetic welcome of a hearty and energetic man. As Scott was now in his prime, we must again quote from Mr. Irving, who says, his "conversation was frank, hearty, picturesque, and dramatic. During the time of my visit, he inclined to the comic rather than the grave in his stories, and such, I was told, was his general inclination. He relished a joke or a trait of humour in social intercourse, and laughed with right good will. He talked, not for effect nor display, but from the flow of his spirits, the stores of his memory, and the vigour of his imagination. He had a natural turn for narrative, and his narratives and descriptions were without effort, yet wonderfully graphic. He placed the scene before you like a picture. His conversation reminded me continually of his novels." The best yet remains. "His nature would not allow him to be a satirist. I do not recollect a sneer throughout his conversation, any more than there is throughout his works." This was Scott's happiest time. His income was not much less than twelve or thirteen thousand pounds, his literary exertions alone producing him nearly ten thousand pounds. Friends, riches, fame, had gathered around him. The honour of the baronetcy, which was conferred on him in 1820, added nothing to his lustre. The child of genius has a blazonry of his own. For such, the shows of the world are weak and vain and "of little worth." Had Scott cared less for them—had he been free of the conventional desire to found a race of lairds, which made him toil and pour out his heart's best blood, and rendered dark and dreary his latter days—he would have been a wiser, and a better, and a stronger man. But he hastened to be rich, and fell into a snare. The publishing house with which Scott was connected fell, and in the fall, Scott fell never to rise again. On January 21st, 1826, the crash came. Scott writes: "Naked we entered the world, and naked we leave it. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Again he writes: "I feel neither dishonoured nor broken down by the bad news. I have walked my last on the domains which I have planted,—sat the last time in the halls which I have built. But death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them." In vain they told him it was the usual mercantile course to become a bankrupt—that Constable would pay but 2s. 9d. in the pound, and Hurst and Co. but 1s. 3d. He was not a merchant, and if God gave him health and strength he would pay all. Nor was this the only trouble. From his pleasant house he had to wander forth alone. From the wreck of his fortune he could not save even the wife of nine-and-twenty years. They bore her to rest in the vaults of ancient Dryburgh, and the gray-haired knight returned to fight the battle of life with decaying strength and a breaking heart.

The remainder of his story is soon told. Friend after friend departed, yet he worked gallantly. In two years he had gained and paid over to his creditors nearly £40,000. "Now I can sleep," he writes, "under the comfortable impression of receiving the thanks of my creditors, and the conscious feeling of discharging my duty as a man of honour and honesty. I

see before me a long, tedious, and dark path, but it leads to stainless reputation. If I die in the harness, as is very likely, I shall die with honour; if I achieve my task, I shall have the thanks of all concerned and the approbation of my own conscience." And again: "I am now restored in constitution, and though I am still on troubled waters, yet I am rowing with the tide, and less than the continuation of my exertions in 1827 may, with God's blessing, carry me safe into port."

The port was nearer than he dreamt. He complained of loss of memory, of being nervous and bilious, and, finally, of a vile palpitation of the heart, that *tremor cordis*, that hysterical passion which forced unbidden sighs and tears. In 1830, on his return from the Parliament House, he found an old lady friend waiting to show him some MSS. He sat down for half an hour, and seemed to be busy with her papers; then he rose as if to take leave of her, but sank down again in his arm-chair, and a spasm convulsed his face. In a minute or two, however, he got up and staggered to the drawing-room, where his daughter Anne and Mrs. Lockhart were sitting. They rose to meet him; but before they could cross the room he fell heavily forward at full length upon the floor, and remained speechless until the doctor arrived and bled him. Renewed depletions and strict regimen were used, and he slightly rallied; but as soon as he recovered a little strength, he again returned to his toil. That toil was soon to be over for ever. We have already reached the beginning of the end. His eye failed—his hand staggered. He was compelled to employ an amanuensis. But work he must and would. Mr. Lockhart begged him to take repose. Sir Walter replied, "I understand you, and I thank you from my heart, but I must tell you at once how it is with me. I am not sure that I am quite myself in all things; but I am sure that in one point there is no change. I mean, that I foresee distinctly that if I were to be idle, I should be mad. In comparison to this, death is no risk to shrink from." Yet he might have lived comfortably if he would. He resigned his clerkship, and had a pension of £800 a year, and his creditors had unanimously passed the following resolution: "That Sir Walter Scott be

requested to accept of his furniture, plate, linen, paintings, library, and curiosities of every description, as the best means the creditors have of expressing their very high sense of his honourable conduct, and in grateful acknowledgment for the unparalleled and most successful exertions he continues to make for them." In 1831, Sir Walter gave to the world his last novels, "Count Robert of Paris," and "Castle Dangerous."

But he grew feeble, in spite of a visit to Italy and the Mediterranean, till at last he was laid on the bed which he was never more to leave alive. His mind wandered. Sometimes he seemed administering justice as sheriff, sometimes he was planting; but generally his mutterings were holy words—words in conformity with his position—words from the Bible or the Prayer-book—the old Scotch psalms of his youth—or portions of the magnificent hymns of the Roman Catholic church. Often the watchers heard the solemn cadence of the "Dies iræ," and, last of all—

"Stabat mater dolorosa,
Juxta crucem, lachrymosa,
Dum pendebat Filius."

"Broken-hearted, lone and tearful,
By that cross of anguish fearful,
Stood the mother by her son."

September came, and the end drew nigh. Often he blessed his children and bade them farewell. His last words were: "Lockhart, I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here." He paused, and his son-in-law asked if he would see his daughters. "No, don't disturb them," was the answer. "Poor souls, I know they were up all night." He never spoke again. His sons arrived, but too late to be recognised; and so they watched and watched him till he died. On the 21st of September, 1832, all that remained of the great Magician of the North was the memory of his kindly heart—of his stalwart presence—of his rare honour, and his genius, rarer still.

THE CONSCRIPT.

IVON MARKER belonged to that department of France where most of all repugnance is felt to entering the army—to Brittany; and Ivon Marker was coming back from the capital of his canton with a light heart, for Ivon had drawn a good number. Ivon Marker was not then to join a regiment. This had been spared him. The father of Ivon was weak and bent by age, his brother Ioan was not old enough to work, and his sister Bellah had Jannik to nurse. Providence, the pious young man believed, had willed it so that a mother should not be left alone to support a family and work on a farm. His two robust arms still remained to work for her.

These were the ideas of the *gars*—as all youths are called in Brittany—as he followed the path along the cultivated ground. And yet the good luck which had saved him from the military lottery did not wholly gratify him; the joy of the hour did not eradicate the cares of the morrow.

Passing nigh his father's cornfield, Ivon stopped and looked at the poor, sterile land, with here and there a blade of corn, and which, from want of sufficient labour, was invaded by the poppy, the weed, and the wild flower. A little further on, when he reached the little meadow which supplied them with hay, he was struck by the invasion of the reeds; further on still, he remarked the apple-trees in the orchard loaded with dead wood, with white moss and mistletoe. Everywhere poverty and sickness had brought on negligence, and negligence sterility. And yet the expenses of the family increased. The miller was asking for his debt, the ploughshare was not paid for, and the harness of the old horse was falling to pieces. It was of no avail that the mother worked half the night, renewing it at dawn, that Ivon ploughed so resolutely, and sank exhausted late at night over the plough: misfortune had moved more rapidly than their courage.

His joy was, then, far from being unmixed; and away he went across the fields, following in the track of the cattle.

Suddenly, as he came round a cluster of hazel-trees, he heard some one weeping and sighing, and also the voices of those who offered consolation. Approaching nearer, he recognised his neighbour Maharitte, surrounded by her relatives, and a little further on, Perr Abgrall, the miller's son, leaning sadly on his stick. This young man had, to the great despair of his affianced wife, drawn an unfortunate number. Marker advanced slowly, and began to offer his condolences together with those of the wise men who surrounded the girl; but Perr interrupted him with all the sharpness of misfortune.

"It is easy for those who have escaped from sorrow and grief to recommend courage to others," said he. "The king does not take from Ivon Marker the seven best years of his life; and he will remain within hearing of the church bell, while we go away to the sound of the drum."

"You are right, my poor friend," said the young *gars*; "in this instance my fate will be better than yours, and do not think that I forget it. If I speak of patience, it is because it is the best stick on which to lean in a long road; I learn it every day of my life by sad experience."

"And here is a *gars* who has had terrible trials indeed," said Abgrall ironically, without being moved by the gentleness of his neighbour. "What can you want in life, to talk of being obliged to be patient?"

"I want what you have got—relatives free from sickness, and the means to keep my parents in their old age free from misery. Every man has his own misfortunes."

"Verily I would change with you readily," said Abgrall, in a more friendly tone, but with a despairing gesture.